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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR DS/IP/RD/SCA, DS/DSS/ITA AND SA/INS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ASEC CASC PTER AMGT

SUBJECT: AMEMBASSY COLOMBO EAC MEETS REGARDING SECURITY
CONSIDERATIONS FOR ELECTION NIGHT EVENTS

REF: SECSTATE 114666

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On October 29, 2008, AmEmbassy Colombo convened an Emergency Action Committee (EAC) meeting in response to guidance provided reftel. The EAC considered potential threats, if any, to post's planned election day representational event. RSO informed the EAC of the security measures for the event, which the EAC concurred were prudent and appropriate to post's threat environment. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) On October 29, 2008, AmEmbassy Colombo convened an EAC meeting. Present for the meeting were the Deputy Chief of Mission, Regional Security Officer, Consular Officer, Political Officer, Economic Officer, Regional Affairs Officer, Management Officer, Public Affairs Officer, USAID Director, IBB Station Chief, Community Liaison Officer, and Marine Security Guard Detachment Commander. The agenda item

for the meeting was post's security plan for the representational "election night" event, scheduled for 0600 to 1200 (noon) local on November 5, 2008 at the Hilton Hotel.

¶3. (SBU) No EAC member had any information that indicated the election day event would be the likely target of an attack. The DCM and RSO noted that the LTTE were highly unlikely to target the event. The LTTE has never intentionally targeted the U.S. or U.S. interests in Sri Lanka. The LTTE is unlikely to target any GSL personalities invited to the event, thereby risking injuries to USG personnel or American expatriates. RSO averred, and the EAC concurred, that there exists no credible information to indicate that Al Qaeda or similar terrorist organizations that might target a U.S.-affiliated event are even present in Sri Lanka. (RSO note - The Muslim minority population in Sri Lanka, although generally opposed to U.S. policies in the Middle East, is more concerned about GSL policies that more directly affect the community.) Therefore, the EAC agreed that post should tailor security measures to actual threat level, rather than implement the entire list detailed reftel.

¶4. (SBU) RSO noted that the Hilton Hotel, in which post is holding the event, is located within one of the most highly restricted security zones in Colombo. The Hilton is close to several high profile GSL facilities. Sri Lanka security force road blocks are on every road leading to, and adjacent to, the Hilton. With few exceptions, the security forces stop and search almost all vehicles that try to enter the high security zone. Therefore, the venue itself will provide a margin of security for the event. Public Affairs had not advertised the event beyond the guest list and added that it was not open to the public. The PAO expects 500 to 700 guests for the event. Since section and agency heads invited contacts, the EAC believed that having Mission staff members available to identify the guests was a prudent measure.

¶5. (SBU) The EAC concurred that the following measures were appropriate in light of the actual threat level:

-- RSO will request support from the Sri Lanka Police Service's (SLPS) Ministerial Security Division (MSD) and Special Task Force (STF).

-- RSO will augment SLPS personnel with Local Guard Force (LGF) members.

-- RSO will ask MSD and STF to conduct a bomb sweep of the venue and to complete the sweep by no later than 0545 hr. on the day of the event. (RSO note - Should neither MSD nor STF be able to provide bomb detection elements at such an early hour, the LGF will sweep the venue with post's own bomb detection equipment.)

-- In the event that an invited guest fails to bring an invitation, Mission personnel will be available to corroborate the person's identity.

-- RSO will ask the Hilton to provide list of employees assigned to the event.

-- LGF staff will check hotel staff assigned to the event with hand-held metal detectors.

¶6. (U) Post will continue to monitor the security environment and plans to safeguard the event. Post will report further developments, if any, septel. POC for this message is RSO Michael V. Perkins, who may be contacted at 94.11.249.8885, 94.11.249.8888 (MSG Post 1 after regular business hours), and by email at perkinsmv@state.gov (unclassified) or perkinsmv@state.sgov.gov (classified).
Blake